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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7417
INFO RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 0578
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0611
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 7598
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 5774
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 4199
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1679
RUEHNW/AMEMBASSY OSLO PRIORITY 4206
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 3302
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 8200
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI PRIORITY 5771
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO PRIORITY 0492
RUEHG/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 2513
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 001708

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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS
MCC FOR D NASSIRY AND E BURKE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2017
TAGS: PGOV PREL PTER PHUM MOPS CE
SUBJECT: SRI LANKA: GOVERNMENT UPS WAR RHETORIC, FIGHTING
CONTINUES

REF: A. COLOMBO 1640

1B. COLOMBO 1604

Classified By: DCM James R. Moore for reasons 1.4(b,d).

11. (C) Summary. In late December, Sri Lanka's Defense Secretary, Prime Minister, and Army Commander spoke out

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confidently on the GSL's prospects of defeating the LTTE militarily. Meanwhile, heavy fighting continued in several areas in the North. The GSL's statements and actions confirm its commitment to pursuing a military strategy to deal with the LTTE. End Summary.

GSL Confidently Endorses War

12. (C) Defense Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa told the Daily News on December 29 that "The ceasefire agreement exists only on paper...It has become a joke. I think the most sensible thing is that we must end this ceasefire agreement by officially declaring that there is no ceasefire agreement." He added that the LTTE should be formally banned. The same day, Prime Minister Ratnasiri Wickremayaka, addressing an awards ceremony for inventors, said the country "can anticipate...2008 as the year in which the terrorists will be comprehensively defeated and totally eliminated." He said the terrorists are "confined only to a limited area and are destined to be totally wiped out in the coming year." On December 30, Army Commander General Sarath Fonseka told the media that "the LTTE could not prevent losing their remaining 3000 cadres and there is no assurance that the LTTE leader V. Prabhakaran would survive for the next six months as the Sri Lanka Air Force plans to attack all the LTTE bases." He added that "our daily target is to kill at least 10 LTTE terrorists. We have weakened the LTTE by 50 percent or more and we are confident that we can go that extra mile in the

coming year."

Heavy Fighting Continues in the North

¶3. (C) Government troops and Tigers engaged in several battles over the weekend. Security forces captured part of Parappaankandal village near Mannar on Saturday, and faced an LTTE counter-attack on Sunday. According to the military spokesman, 33 LTTE cadres were killed in that battle and in a separate clash in Mannar district. Six government soldiers were wounded, according to the defense ministry, but the Tigers claim to have killed 20. The two sides also clashed in Vavuniya district on Sunday. On December 28, Sri Lankan Air Force jets attacked an LTTE "coordinating center for international activities" in Kilinochchi.

¶4. (C) On December 26, the Sri Lankan Navy and the Sea Tigers clashed off the coast of Mannar District, south of Delft Island. According to the Navy, 19 LTTE boats and one SLN fast attack craft were sunk. At least 11 SLN sailors were killed. Navy contacts say the battle was a cover for an LTTE re-supply mission at Vidattaltiva, which was completed successfully.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: These recent public statements by high-level GSL officials underscore the Government's resolve to pursue a military solution to the ethnic conflict. The latest attacks track with the President's statement to Ambassador earlier this month (ref a) that the GSL would "keep the pressure on the LTTE." Post will continue to urge senior officials to be at least as diligent in searching for a lasting political solution.

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